BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSIO

OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

06-15-07 11:22 AM

Order Instituting Rulemaking on the Commission's 4 Own motion into the service quality standards for 5 All telecommunications carriers and revisions to General Order 133-B 6

R.02-12-004

REPLY COMMENTS OF

CALAVERAS TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1004 C) CAL-ORE TELEPHONE CO. (U 1006 C) **DUCOR TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1007 C)** GLOBAL VALLEY NETWORKS, INC. (U 1008 C) FORESTHILL TELEPHONE CO. (U 1009 C) HAPPY VALLEY TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1010 C) **HORNITOS TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1011 C)** KERMAN TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1012 C) PINNACLES TELEPHONE CO. (U 1013 C) THE PONDEROSA TELEPHONE CO. (U 1014 C) SIERRA TELEPHONE COMPANY, INC. (U 1016 C) THE SISKIYOU TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1017 C) THE VOLCANO TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1019 C) WINTERHAVEN TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1021 C)

ON ASSIGNED COMMISSIONER'S RULING AND SCOPING MEMO

E. Garth Black Mark P. Schreiber Sean P. Beatty Patrick M. Rosvall COOPER, WHITE & COOPER LLP 201 California Street – 17th Floor San Francisco, CA 94111 Telephone: (415) 433-1900 Telecopier: (415) 433-5530

Attorneys for Small LECs

June 15, 2007

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REPLY COMMENTS OF

CALAVERAS TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1004 C)
CAL-ORE TELEPHONE CO. (U 1006 C)
DUCOR TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1007 C)
GLOBAL VALLEY NETWORKS, INC. (U 1008 C)
FORESTHILL TELEPHONE CO. (U 1009 C)
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WINTERHAVEN TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1021 C)

ON ASSIGNED COMMISSIONER'S RULING AND SCOPING MEMO

Calaveras Telephone Company, Cal-Ore Telephone Co., Ducor Telephone Company, Global Valley Networks, Inc., Foresthill Telephone Co., Happy Valley Telephone Company, Hornitos Telephone Company, Kerman Telephone Co., Pinnacles Telephone Co., The Ponderosa Telephone Co., Sierra Telephone Company, Inc., The Siskiyou Telephone Company, The Volcano Telephone Company and Winterhaven Telephone Company (collectively, the "Small LECs") hereby file these reply comments on the Assigned Commissioner's Ruling and Scoping Memo ("Ruling") issued in this Rulemaking 02-12-004 ("Rulemaking") on March 30, 2007. In summary, it is clear from the opening comments of the parties and the record developed to date in this proceeding that the Commission does not need to concern itself with any new service quality standards or reporting for the Small LECs at this time. The quality of telephone service provided by the Small LECs remains uniformly excellent, and there will be no benefit to customers, the Small LECs or the Commission resulting from the creation of new standards or reporting requirements applicable to the Small LECs. Moreover, it is clear that the Commission has before it some very important choices concerning how it will monitor and regulate service quality for URF companies, CLECs and wireless companies in the rapidly evolving telecommunications market in the coming years. These companies operate in different competitive markets from the Small LECs, and the Commission could not properly apply monitoring rules and service quality standards developed for those companies to the Small LECs

without careful analysis of how the Small LECs differ from these other entities. It is not the time to undertake the arduous task of evaluating and implementing new service quality standards or reporting requirements for the Small LECs that would be of dubious value to customers and that would be expensive to implement.

I.

THE OPENING COMMENTS OF NO PARTY PROVIDED ANY EVIDENCE OR EVEN SUGGESTED THAT THE SERVICE QUALITY OF THE SMALL LECS REQUIRES ADDITIONAL MONITORING OR THE IMPOSITION OF ANY NEW STANDARDS

The Small LECs explained in their opening comments in this proceeding that they had already submitted a substantial amount of data concerning their service quality in an earlier phase of this proceeding, and that the data they submitted demonstrated that across the board the Small LECs were providing uniformly and consistently excellent service to their customers by every measurement employed by the Commission. No party has attempted to rebut this evidence and it must be viewed as uncontested and correct.

II.

IN LIGHT OF THE HIGH QUALITY OF SMALL LEC SERVICE, THE BENEFITS OF NEW MEASUREMENTS OR RULES ARE LIKELY TO BE INSIGNIFICANT AND THE COSTS SUBSTANTIAL

In light of the uncontested evidence of the existing good service quality provided by the Small LECs, it seems obvious that no new service standards are required insofar as the Small LECs are concerned.¹ As the Small LECs pointed out in their opening comments, they are presently subject to reporting under General Order 133-B and do not object to its continuation for the time being. The Small LECs have systems in place that capture the necessary information, and the expense of continuing these procedures and reporting when required will not be great and are already reflected in

¹ It appears that DRA's proposal for customer surveys applies only to URF companies. (DRA Opening Comments, p. 6). TURN's support for customer surveys is "luke warm" at best. (TURN Opening Comments, pp. 16-17). There is no basis in the record for extending any regime of Commission sponsored customer surveys that might be adopted to the Small LECs.

their rates and revenues. However, adding additional measurement and reporting obligations or making material modifications as DRA and TURN have proposed is not justified.

In opening comments no party presented a sound justification for why new service measurements or reporting by Small LECs would benefit customers. This is true with respect both to new standards proposed by DRA and TURN, and the "positive reporting" DRA proposes, as opposed to the exception reporting that presently exists for the Small LECs. (DRA Opening Comments, p. 10). Additional reporting by the Small LECs will be expensive, and these costs will inevitably be paid by telephone customers. In order to justify new reporting for the Small LECs, the Commission should be able to identify clear benefits to the customers who will pay for the costs of the new requirements. The record in this proceeding does not support new reporting for Small LECs, and any perceived benefits would be minimal or nonexistent.

If the Commission creates any new G.O. 133-B reporting and measurement obligations, it should exempt the Small LECs from them. Several of the existing G.O. 133-B measurements already provide such an exemption on a de facto basis by creating a size threshold for reporting offices. For example, current G.O. 133-B, §3.7 for addressing Directory Assistance Operator Answering Time applies only to those traffic offices handling 2,000 on an average business day. This limit effectively exempts many of the Small LECs from this standard. Presumably, this de facto exemption was adopted because of the expense of measurement and reporting as well as a perception that there was no problem with respect to small traffic offices that required the Commission's attention. The record concerning Small LEC service quality already in the record in this proceeding supports such an exemption to any new measurement or reporting obligations.

The additional service quality standards proposed by DRA would exempt small carriers who are not COLRS (DRA Opening Comments, p. 21). Presumably, this proposed small carrier exemption is based on unique circumstances of small carriers who are not COLRS, including greater per customer cost of any new requirements. The apparent reasons for this DRA proposed exemption also apply to the Small LECs, and should be extended to them as well if any of DRA's proposals are adopted. While COLRS are subject to more rigorous regulation with respect to the range of service offerings they must provide than are competitive carriers, this proposed exemption is a tacit

admission by DRA that the size of a carrier may influence the amount of service quality measurement and reporting that the Commission should require of smaller carriers for reasons of cost and efficiency.

The Small LECs also note that both TURN and DRA propose the elimination of existing G.O. 133-B standards for Held Primary Service Orders and Line Energizing Commitments Met. The Small LECs support the elimination of these standards for the reasons stated by DRA and TURN, i.e. their lack of value in the existing California telecommunications market.

III.

DRA'S PROPOSED CHANGES TO G.O. 133-B ARE NOT SUPPORTED

DRA proposes that four measures of operator service answering time contained in existing G.O. 133-B be combined into one standard. (DRA Opening Comments, p. 8). This proposal is not feasible for the Small LECs without significant further modification of G.O. 133-B for Small LECs, and without significant additional expense. Presently, toll operator answering time applies to offices that receive 2,000 or more calls per day. (G.O. 133-B, §3.6). Likewise, the standard for directory assistance operator answering time applies to offices having an average business day call volume of 2,000 or more calls. (G.O. 133-B, § 3.7). The call volume thresholds prescribed by these measurements exempt some but not all of the Small LECs, and the Small LECs measure and report accordingly.

By contrast, the standard for trouble report answering time and business office answering time apply only to all centralized service groups which support 10,000 or more lines, a threshold that is different both in terms of size and triggering criterion. (G.O. 133-B §§3.8 and 3.9). All but four of the Small LECs are exempt from the §§ 3.8 and 3.9 standards. Therefore, combining these four standards for measurement and reporting is not possible with the present thresholds. Combining the standards arguably would exempt all but four of the Small LECs or require reconsideration of the measurement and reporting thresholds by the Commission, which is not being done as a part of this record. Moreover, any attempt to modify the quantity thresholds to apply to additional or all Small LECs would create large additional costs for many of the Small LECs with no countervailing benefit

to customers. Making such changes without an adequate evidentiary record would be arbitrary and further action should not be taken without adequate consideration of the costs and benefits of doing so.

Finally, combining all four existing measures into one omnibus measure for operator service, changing the reporting to quarterly rather than monthly as DRA also proposes, and providing that a company failing to meet the prescribed standard for one quarter is to be deemed to fail for the entire years distorts results of the measurements. One disaster event such as a bad storm could cause a carrier that provides good service to fail in one quarter as to one of the existing measures, and be deemed to fail for the entire year as to all four combined measures, thereby distorting the carrier's performance record. This would be illogical and unfair, and such a standard should not be adopted

IV. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, there is no justification for imposing additional service quality standards or reporting on the Small LECs. In addition, the measures for operator service should not be combined for the Small LECs. For the time being, and pending further market developments and assessment of the impact of new rules adopted for URF carriers, CLECs and wireless carriers, the

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service quality rules for Small LECs should not be changed except for the elimination of the standards proposed by DRA and TURN.

Executed at San Francisco, California this 15th day of June, 2007.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Garth Black
Mark P. Schreiber
Sean P. Beatty
Patrick M. Rosvall
COOPER, WHITE & COOPER LLP
201 California Street, 17th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 433-1900

FAX: (415) 433-5530

E. Garth Black

email: gblack@cwclaw.com

Attorneys for Small LECs

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE BY MAIL

I, Martin Spence, declare:

I am a resident of the State of California, over the age of eighteen years, and not a party to the within action. My business address is COOPER, WHITE & COOPER LLP, 201 California Street, 17th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94111.

On June 15, 2007, I served the following:

REPLY COMMENTS OF

CALAVERAS TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1004 C)
CAL-ORE TELEPHONE CO. (U 1006 C)
DUCOR TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1007 C)
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WINTERHAVEN TELEPHONE COMPANY (U 1021 C)

ON ASSIGNED COMMISSIONER'S RULING AND SCOPING MEMO

by email to those who provided email addresses, and by placing a true and correct copy thereof with the firm's mailing room personnel for mailing in accordance with the firm's ordinary practices to the parties on the CPUC's service list in this proceeding.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on June 15, 2007 at San Francisco, California.

Martin Spence

SERVICE LIST

CPUC Service List as of 05/17/07 Proceeding No. R. 02-12-004

CHARLES HARAK NATIONAL CONSUMER LAW CENTER 77 SUMMER STREET, 10TH FLOOR BOSTON, MA 2110 BARBARA R. ALEXANDER CONSUMER AFFAIRS CONSULTANT 83 WEDGEWOOD DRIVE WINTHROP, ME 4364

WILLIAM K. MOSCA COMCAST BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS, INC. 10 INDEPENDENCE WAY WARREN, NJ 7059

LAURA L. HOLLOWAY NEXTEL COMMUNICATIONS, INC. 2001 EDMUND HALLEY DRIVE RESTON, VA 20091 TERRANCE SPANN
US ARMY LEGAL SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY (JALS-RL)
901 N. STUART STREET, SUITE 700
ARLINGTON, VA 22203-1837

CORALETTE HANNON, ESQUIRE AARP LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE 6705 REEDY CREEK ROAD CHARLOTTE, NC 28215

MARK ASHBY CINGULAR WIRELESS 5565 GLENRIDGE CONNECTOR, STE 1700 ATLANTA, GA 30342 JEFFREY M. PFAFF SPRINT PCS KSOPHN0212-2A509 6450 SPRINT PARKWAY OVERLAND PARK, KS 66251-6100

ANN JOHNSON VERIZON HQE02F61 600 HIDDEN RIDGE IRVING, TX 75038

JOHN SISEMORE, DIRECTOR AT&T SERVICES 175 E. HOUSTON STREET, ROOM 10-M-10 SAN ANTONIO, TX 78205

KATHERINE K. MUDGE, SENIOR COUNSEL COVAD COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY 7000 NORTH MOPAC EXPRESSWAY, 2D FL AUSTIN, TX 78731 REX KNOWLES, REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT XO COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES, INC. 111 EAST BROADWAY, SUITE 1000 SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84111

ALAN L. PEPPER
MITCHELL SILBERBERG & KNUPP LLP
TRIDENT CENTER
11377 W OLYMPIC BLVD., SUITE 200
LOS ANGELES, CA 90064-1683

MICHAEL MANCHESTER 1749 10TH STREET, NO. 1 SANTA MONICA, CA 90404 ALEJANDRO JIMENEZ AT&T MOBILITY 12900 PARK PLAZA DRIVE TUSTIN, CA 90703

W. LEE BIDDLE FERRIS AND BRITTON, APC 401 W. A ST., SUITE 1600 SAN DIEGO, CA 92101 MICHAEL SHAMES, ATTORNEY AT LAW UTILITY CONSUMERS' ACTION NETWORK 3100 FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE B SAN DIEGO, CA 92103

LAURIE ITKIN CRICKET COMMUNICATIONS, INC. 10307 PACIFIC CENTER COURT SAN DIEGO, CA 92121

M. ESTELA LARA CENTRO LA FAMILIA ADVOCACY SERVICES, INC 2014 TULARE STREET, SUITE 711 FRESNO, CA 93721 MARC D. JOSEPH, ATTORNEY AT LAW ADAMS BROADWELL JOSEPH & CARDOZO 601 GATEWAY BLVD. STE 1000 SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94080

BOB FINKELSTEIN, ATTORNEY AT LAW THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK 711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 350 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

CHRISTINE MAILLOUX, ATTORNEY AT LAW THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK 711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 350 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102 ELAINE M. DUNCAN, ATTORNEY AT LAW VERIZON CALIFORNIA INC. 711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 300 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

REGINA COSTA THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK 711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 350 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102 RUDY REYES VERIZON 711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 300 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102 WILLIAM NUSBAUM, ATTORNEY AT LAW THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK 711 VAN NESS AVENUE, SUITE 350 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102 CHARLYN A. HOOK
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LEGAL DIVISION
ROOM 4107
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

JASON J. ZELLER
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LEGAL DIVISION
ROOM 5030
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

MONICA L. MCCRARY CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION LEGAL DIVISION ROOM 5134 505 VAN NESS AVENUE SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

SINDY J. YUN
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LEGAL DIVISION
ROOM 4300
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

KATHERINE S. RITCHEY ATTORNEY AT LAW JONES DAY 555 CALIFORNIA STREET, 26TH FLOOR SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94104 RANDOLPH W. DEUTSCH ATTORNEY AT LAW SIDLEY, AUSTIN, BROWN & WOOD, LLP SUITE 2000 555 CALIFORNIA STREET SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94104

STEPHEN B. BOWEN, ATTORNEY AT LAW BOWEN LAW GROUP 235 MONTGOMERY STREET, SUITE 920 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94104

AGNES NG
AT&T COMMUNICATIONS OF CALIFORNIA,
INC.
525 MARKET ST 20TH FLOOR 4
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

ANDREA JOHNSON AT&T CALIFORNIA 525 MARKET STREET, SUITE 1944 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105 DAVID P. DISCHER, GENERAL ATTORNEY AT&T CALIFORNIA 525 MARKET STREET, ROOM 2027 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

GREGORY L. CASTLE, SENIOR COUNSEL AT&T CALIFORNIA 525 MARKET STREET, RM. 2022 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

JEAN PARKER WORKING ASSETS 101 MARKET STREET, SUITE 700 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105 MARY E. WAND, ATTORNEY AT LAW MORRISON & FOERSTER LLP 425 MARKET STREET SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

STEPHEN H. KUKTA, COUNSEL SPRINT NEXTEL 201 MISSION STREET, SUITE 1400 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105 THOMAS J. SELHORST AT&T CALIFORNIA 525 MARKET STREET, RM. 2023 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105 JAMES W. MCTARNAGHAN ATTORNEY AT LAW DUANE MORRIS LLP ONE MARKET, SPEAR TOWER 2000 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-1104

GLENN STOVER, ATTORNEY AT LAW STOVER LAW 221 MAIN STREET, SUITE 800 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-1906 PETER A. CASCIATO, ATTORNEY AT LAW PETER A. CASCIATO P.C. 355 BRYANT STREET, SUITE 410 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

CARL K. OSHIRO, ATTORNEY AT LAW CSBRT/CSBA 100 PINE STREET, SUITE 3110 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

DOUGLAS H. BOSCO HOLLAND & KNIGHT, LLC 50 CALIFORNIA STREET, SUITE 2800 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111 JAMES M. TOBIN, ESQUIRE TWO EMBARCADERO CENTER, SUITE 1800 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

JOHN CLARK, ATTORNEY AT LAW GOODIN MACBRIDE SQUERI DAY & LAMPREY LLP 505 SANSOME STREET, 9TH FLOOR SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111 JOSEPH F. WIEDMAN, ATTORNEY AT LAW GOODIN MACBRIDE SQUERI DAY & LAMPREY LLP 505 SANSOME STREET, SUITE 900 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

LUIS ARTEAGA LATINO ISSUES FORUM 160 PINE STREET, SUITE 700 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

SARAH DEYOUNG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CALTEL 50 CALIFORNIA STREET, SUITE 1500 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

SARAH E. LEEPER, ATTORNEY AT LAW STEEFEL, LEVITT & WEISS ONE EMBARCADERO CENTER, 30TH FLOOR SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

SUZANNE TOLLER, ATTORNEY AT LAW DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE 505 MONTGOMERY STREET, SUITE 800 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111-6533 EARL NICHOLAS SELBY ATTORNEY AT LAW LAW OFFICES OF EARL NICHOLAS SELBY 418 FLORENCE STREET PALO ALTO, CA 94301

JOHN GUTIERREZ, DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMCAST PHONE OF CALIFORNIA, LLC 12647 ALCOSTA BLVD., SUITE 200 SAN RAMON, CA 94583 ANITA C. TAFF-RICE, ATTORNEY AT LAW 1547 PALOS VERDES MALL, SUITE 298 WALNUT CREEK, CA 94597

DOUG GARRETT COX CALIFORNIA TELCOM LLC 2200 POWELL STREET, SUITE 1035 EMERYVILLE, CA 94608

JOSE JIMENEZ COX CALIFORNIA TELCOM, L.L.C. 2200 POWELL STREET, SUITE 1035 EMERYVILLE, CA 94608 MARILYN ASH U.S. TELEPACIFIC CORP. 6101 CHRISTIE AVE. EMERYVILLE, CA 94608 GLENN SEMOW
CALIFORNIA CABLE & TELECOMM. ASSOC.
360 22ND STREET, STE. 750
OAKLAND, CA 94612

LEON M. BLOOMFIELD, ATTORNEY AT LAW WILSON & BLOOMFIELD, LLP 1901 HARRISON STREET, SUITE 1620 OAKLAND, CA 94612 LESLA LEHTONEN, VP LEGAL AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS CALIFORNIA CABLE & TELECOM ASSOCIATION 360 22ND STREET, SUITE 750 OAKLAND, CA 94612 ETHAN SPRAGUE
PAC-WEST TELECOMM, INC.
1776 W. MARCH LANE, SUITE 250
STOCKTON, CA 95207

GAYATRI SCHILBERG JBS ENERGY 311 D STREET, SUITE A WEST SACRAMENTO, CA 95605

LUPE DE LA CRUZ AARP CALIFORNIA 1415 L ST STE 960 SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-3977 CINDY MANHEIM CINGULAR WIRELESS PO BOX 97061 REDMOND, WA 98073-9761

ROBERT SPANGLER SNAVELY ING & MAJOROS O'CONNOR & LEE INC 1220 L STREET N.W. SUITE 410 WASHINGTON, DC 20005 WILLIAM D. WALLACE ESQ.
VERIZON WIRELESS
1300 I STREET, N.W., SUITE 400 WEST
WASHINGTON, DC 20005

MAUREEN K. FLOOD TELECOM POLICY ANALYST HARRIS, WILTSHIRE & GRANNIS LLP 1200 EIGHTEENTH STREET, NW WASHINGTON, DC 20036

MICHAEL R. ROMANO, DIRECTOR-STATE REGULATORY AFFAIRS LEVEL 3 COMMUNICATIONS, LLC 2300 CORPORATE PARK DR STE. 600 HERNDON, VA 20171-4845

ROBERT N. KITTEL U.S. ARMY LITIGATION CENTER 901 N. STUART STREET, SUITE 700 ARLINGTON, VA 22203-1837 KEVIN SAVILLE ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS 2378 WILSHIRE BLVD. MOUND, MN 55364

MARJORIE O. HERLTH QWEST COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION 1801 CALIFORNIA ST., SUITE 4700 DENVER, CO 80202 ALOA STEVENS, DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT&EXTERNAL AFFAIRS FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS PO BOX 708970 SANDY, UT 84070-8970

CHRISTINA V. TUSAN, ATTORNEY AT LAW CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE 300 SOUTH SPRING ST., 11TH FLOOR LOS ANGELES, CA 90012 PAMELA PRESSLEY
LITIGATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR
FOUNDATION FOR TAXPAYER&CONSUMER
RIGHTS
1750 OCEAN PARK BLVD., SUITE 200
SANTA MONICA, CA 90405

JACQUE LOPEZ, LEGAL ASSISTANT VERIZON CALIFORNIA INC CA501LB 112 LAKEVIEW CANYON ROAD THOUSAND OAKS, CA 91362 ESTHER NORTHRUP COX CALIFORNIA TELCOM 5159 FEDERAL BLVD. SAN DIEGO, CA 92105

MICHAEL BAGLEY VERIZON WIRELESS 15505 SAND CANYON AVENUE IRVINE, CA 92612

THOMAS MAHR, VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL COUNSEL VERIZON WIRELESS 15505 SAN CANYON AVE E305 IRVINE, CA 92618 MIKE MULKEY ARRIVAL COMMUNICATIONS 1807 19TH STREET BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301

JAN HEWITT
AT&T CALIFORNIA
REGULATORY DEPT.
525 MARKET ST., ROOM 1803
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

TERESA M. ONO AT&T COMMUNICATIONS OF CALIFORNIA, INC. 525 MARKET ST. 18TH FLOOR, 4 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105 YVETTE HOGUE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT&T CALIFORNIA 525 MARKET STREET, ROOM 1918 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2727

MARGARET L. TOBIAS TOBIAS LAW OFFICE 460 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107 MICHAEL B. DAY, ATTORNEY AT LAW GOODIN MACBRIDE SQUERI DAY & LAMPREY LLP 505 SANSOME STREET, SUITE 900 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

JUDY PAU DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE LLP 505 MONTGOMERY STREET, SUITE 800 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111-6533

KATIE NELSON DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE, LLP 505 MONTGOMERY STREET, SUITE 800 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111-6533 TERRENCE E. SCOTT SBC ADVANCED SOLUTIONS, INC. 2623 CAMINO RAMON, ROOM 2C111 SAN RAMON, CA 94583 KRISTIN JACOBSON, MARKET ATTORNEY, CONSULTANT NEXTEL OF CALIFORNIA, INC. 1255 TREAT BLVD., SUITE 800 WALNUT CREEK, CA 94596

MARIA POLITZER
CALIFORNIA CABLE & TELECOM
ASSOCIATION
360 22ND STREET, NO. 750
OAKLAND, CA 94612

MELISSA W. KASNITZ DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATES 2001 CENTER STREET, THIRD FLOOR BERKELEY, CA 94704-1204 JOSH P. THIERIOT, REGULATORY TEAM PAC-WEST TELECOMM 1776 W. MARCH LANE, SUITE 250 STOCKTON, CA 95207

JOSH THIERIOT
PAC-WEST TELECOMM, INC.
1776 W. MARCH LN, STE. 250
STOCKTON, CA 95207

CHARLES E. BORN, MANAGER-STATE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS FRONTIER, A CITIZENS TELECOMMUNICATIONS PO BOX 340 ELK GROVE, CA 95759

MARGARET FELTS, PRESIDENT CALIFORNIA COMMUNICATIONS ASSN 1851 HERITAGE LANE STE 255 SACRAMENTO, CA 95815-4923

SUSAN LIPPER, SENIOR MANAGER, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS T-MOBILE USA, INC. 1755 CREEKSIDE OAKS DIVE, SUITE 190 SACRAMENTO, CA 95833 SHEILA HARRIS, MANAGER GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS INTEGRA TELECOM HOLDINGS, INC. 1201 NE LLOYD BLVD., STE.500 PORTLAND, OR 97232 ADAM L. SHERR, ATTORNEY AT LAW QWEST COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION 1600 7TH AVENUE, 3206 SEATTLE, WA 98191-0000 ANDREW O. ISAR, DIRECTOR
-STATE AFFAIRS
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNICATIONS
ENTERPRISE
7901 SKANSIE AVE., SUITE 240
GIG HARBOR, WA 98335

DALE PIIRU
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
TELECOMMUNICATIONS & CONSUMER
ISSUES BRANCH
ROOM 4108

505 VAN NESS AVENUE

SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

FALINE FUA
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT &
IMPLEMENTATION BRANCH
AREA 3-E
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

KAREN MILLER
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
PUBLIC ADVISOR OFFICE
ROOM 2103
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

MARY JO BORAK
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
TELECOMMUNICATIONS & CONSUMER
ISSUES BRANCH
ROOM 4101
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

SARITA SARVATE
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
ENERGY DIVISION
AREA 4-A
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

JOEY PERMAN
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
MARKET STRUCTURE BRANCH
320 WEST 4TH STREET SUITE 500
LOS ANGELES, CA 90013

DANA APPLING
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
DIVISION OF RATEPAYERS ADVOCATES
ROOM 4201
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

JANICE L. GRAU
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW
JUDGES
ROOM 5011
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

LINDA J. WOODS
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
UTILITY & PAYPHONE ENFORCEMENT
AREA 2-A
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

RICHARD SMITH
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW
JUDGES
ROOM 5019
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

JAMES W. HOWARD
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
UTILITY & PAYPHONE ENFORCEMENT
770 L STREET, SUITE 1050
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

CHRIS WITTEMAN
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LEGAL DIVISION
ROOM 5129
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

DENISE MANN
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
TELECOMMUNICATIONS & CONSUMER
ISSUES BRANCH
ROOM 4101
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

JOHN M. LEUTZA
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION
ROOM 3210
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

LINETTE YOUNG
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SAFETY
DIVISION
AREA 2-D
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214

RUDY SASTRA
CALIF PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
UTILITY & PAYPHONE ENFORCEMENT
AREA 2-D
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3214